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Vail, Theodore Newton

“Get together”

[S.I.]

[1916]

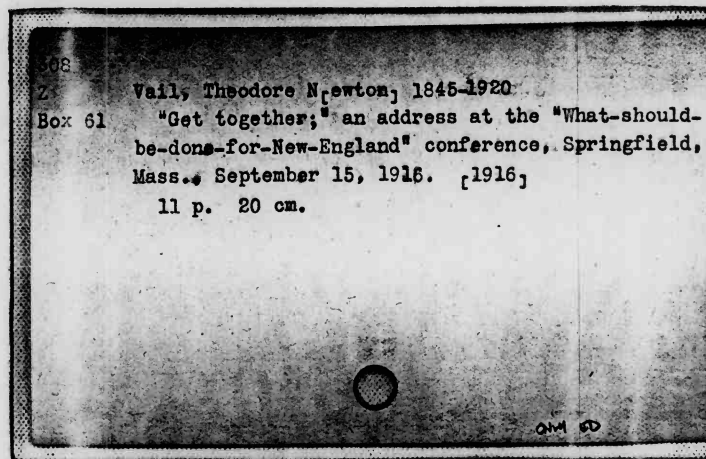
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"GET TOGETHER"

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AN ADDRESS

AT THE

**"WHAT-SHOULD-BE-DONE-FOR-NEW
ENGLAND" CONFERENCE**

SPRINGFIELD, MASS., SEPTEMBER 15, 1916

BY

THEODORE N. VAIL

"GET TOGETHER"

Gentlemen:

The purpose of this conference is to get together.

All substantial progress in any line is made by properly directed effort. Direction implies a well considered policy; it implies co-operative and co-ordinated operation; it implies an organization in which all new ideas, all innovation or change; shall passively proceed from the body to the center as suggestions for consideration, and the formulated policy proceed from the center and control all activities. It is not that individual ideas may not be good. They are often good, but very seldom complete; they always require reinforcement or reconstruction and sublimation. They, either singly or in combination with others, are the origin of every great movement or great enterprise or activity, but it is only after concerted effort made effective by organization that any substantial progress has ever been made. Many things which are mediocre have succeeded through organization, and many things which were superlatively good have failed for lack of organization.

The fundamental principle of society is harmony, and harmony can only be obtained by free and frank exchange of views and allowing the consensus of opinion of a majority of all to decide and control. In these days of close intercommunity interstate and international, intercourse and intercommunication, concerted organized action, on well considered perfectly understood lines can accomplish almost anything. Individual, separate, or diverse action can accomplish little for the community, however much it can accomplish for the individual.

It should need no argument to impress upon all, the close interdependence between all classes; between all the relations, enterprises and activities, of all the people. The keynote of real

substantial progress, is to thoroughly believe this, and completely accept and act on it.

The prosperity of the producer is dependent upon the purchasing power of the consumer. Commercial activity or prosperity is dependent upon activity of interchange and intercommunication.

Interchange of manufactured or produced commodities;—interchange of the surplus of one man one section or one country,—for the surplus of another man section or country,—is the basis of all commercial or industrial activity,—it is the basis of all wealth. It is either the cause or the result, or both cause and result, of the development of the instrumentalities of transportation and intercommunication; of all commercial and financial operation and of progress in all activities. It precedes development of all kinds, physical or mental, social or economical, moral or ethical.

In the consideration of the subject which will come before us, we must deal in general terms and wide spread effects. We cannot and must not single out individual variations or individual instances and use them for purposes of generalization. Anything can be seemingly proved by exceptions, taken as the basis for generalizations; all that exceptions are useful for is to show what the rule is.

We must thoroughly realize and educate all, whether their income is through investment or wages for labor, to realize that it is not larger income or higher wages alone, that increases either our purchasing power or our consumption. If the prices of commodities increase in the same ratio that income or wages increase, the purchasing power is unchanged, the consumption is not increased.

We must realize that increased prosperity is the result of the development, of the expansion, of the purchasing power of the unit of labor or the unit of exchange; that this is the result of the application of advanced mechanical and scientific methods to production and industry by which more is produced, with

less effort, less expenditure of brawn and brains. That through these methods both labor and capital are made more effective, and many things which were luxuries in preceding generations, are put within reach of all and have become necessities.

That the increase in remuneration for the unit of labor is made possible by the decrease in unit costs of production, both agricultural and industrial. That decrease in costs and prices, where there is a potential market, increases the aggregate profits.

Prices depend upon costs. There must be a fair profit. Without profit in some form production would be reduced to that minimum which each individual can produce for his own necessities or to barter for any occasional surplus of others. If profits were destroyed wealth would disappear, for wealth is merely the tangible expression, the concrete evidence, of the earning power of productive enterprise. When profits from enterprise are destroyed, "community stagnation" will take the place of "universal, widespread prosperity."

Increased production, increased consumption and increased profits and increased wealth must come from increased effectiveness of all the elements that enter into production.

Increased effectiveness can only come from advanced research and study and investigation and the adoption or application of all the highest practical methods which trial, experiment and experience establish to be good.

We will have gone far in the final solution of our economic as well as our social and sociological questions and disturbances, if we will only bear all these economic principles in mind and realize that they are the basis of all our wealth and prosperity and that the whole machinery of interchange, intercommunication, production, transportation, distribution and consumption are so wonderfully and intimately interwoven and interdependent that you cannot disturb one without upsetting the other.

These are the policies which have, in the recent past, produced those great results in the industrial world; those results

which are so astonishing, overwhelming and overpowering that the world has been set agog, and all established traditions in our economic pursuits disturbed, because they have not been properly understood.

The unthinking, the demagogue and the ignorant have attributed the results of effectiveness to unfair and dishonest methods. While doubtless our prosperity has been accompanied by some irregularities, the ratio of these irregularities to the total achievements has been no greater than they were under the old fashioned methods. There always will be, there always have been highwaymen who preyed on prosperity, but you would not destroy prosperity to eradicate the highwayman.

In New England agriculture has suffered during the up-building of our new country because of the relative unremunerativeness of it. The would-be farmer has sought the fertile and cheap lands of the newer countries in which to build their homes, as did their progenitors who came into New England when it was a wilderness. Those new countries are now filled up and now have no advantage over the East in land, labor or other conditions. The broad prairies upon which those great fields of grain were grown, those far extending ranches upon which vast herds of cattle roamed, are now divided up into small farms and homes. That land where single individual enterprises produced food stuff for thousands is now occupied by thousands of families, with large capacity of consumption. Industrial enterprises, filled with thousands of consuming employees, have been built up in their midst. Production has been overtaken by consumption. They can no longer supply our industrial New England with food stuff—vegetable and animal—at such prices, as will make it impossible for the New England farmer to compete. New England industrially must in the future depend on New England agriculturally for its supplies.

The great West, and the great commercial and industrial centers which have been tempting the New England boy from home, do not now offer the same comparative ease and comfort

and opportunity to those who have to live by their own physical exertion, as they once did. For all those, rural opportunities are now equal and rural conditions superior. When the new generations of boys in rural New England understand this, appreciate this, they will act accordingly, and we will see rural New England keeping pace with industrial New England, and the pace will be one that will go far when once started.

Our new generations must be led to realize these changes and be shown that the same methods must be applied to the rural industries that have been introduced into the manufacturing industry. We must stimulate their imagination and encourage their interest in new methods and new ways; we must develop an active interest and enjoyment in production, in growing things whether animal or vegetable.

We must let the girl and the boy realize the absolute fallacy of the old saying founded on country life "That man's work is from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done;"—that it is a most pernicious doctrine.

Commercial, financial, industrial and even intellectual New England must be made to realize, that to hold its own proper place, against the rapidly advancing practical introduction of these principles throughout the rest of this country, this new movement must be extended to every nook and corner of New England.

If we are to change the new generations, we must commence with the children, commence with the beginning of the child's formative period. We must impress these truths upon the unformed and yet impressible mind. We must not allow those old heresies of the hardships, sufferings, never-ending drudgery of agricultural and rural pursuits to get any lodgment in the child's mind. We must make the child realize that nothing worth the having is obtained without effort. That self-indulgence in youth means suffering and privations in old age. We must make the child appreciate by the proper education and proper treatments, the beauties and the attractiveness as well as the

profitableness and opportunity of rural life and rural pursuits.

Co-operation can do much to advance rural interests.

Co-operation is mutual action based on mutual confidence and applied to common interests; without confidence or advantage co-operation cannot succeed. It is the Golden Rule applied to commercialism and industrialism.

By co-operation is not meant any destruction of the necessary existing intermediaries between the producer and consumer, but the introduction of those auxiliary and helpful to all, and the retention of all the old ones that are necessary. The unnecessary will soon disappear.

Through co-operation, false representations whether direct or implied must be discountenanced, and whatever is produced must be stamped for what it is, that no customer or collector or distributor can be deceived.

By co-operation is meant regulation and improvement in methods of gathering, packing, grading, storing and distributing, that freshness and quality can be preserved, and congestion can be prevented.

Co-operation, so that the small producers can combine their products and command attention from the markets as do large producers.

Co-operation between neighbors, by which expensive machines can be made to do the work of many farms and thus save in original investment in equipment, but what is still greater in depreciation and interest account on idle machinery.

Co-operation in labor by which during those seasons which are short but busy and cannot be done best by individuals working alone but better by members working together—neighbors can exchange and thus save the wage bills.

Much has been said about "from the farm to the consumer." This on a large scale such as will make wide prosperity, or such as can be applied to great development, is the sheerest nonsense. No farmer can supply regularly and continuously a family's needs in any one article, and far from it,

can any one farm produce all the articles which any one consumer needs. Through co-operation, however, many producers can combine even if they are small ones, and through varied production and combination of products can command to a great extent the market both to their own advantage and to the advantage of the consumer.

Co-operation can be advantageous in purchasing those things of large and general consumption.

While much can be done by co-operation in both purchasing and distributing, do not for one moment imagine that the middleman is to be eliminated. There must be always a reasonable sufficiency of wholesale and retail collectors and distributors. There must always be a comprehensive transportation system. There must be the middlemen of commerce, and trade and finance. They are necessary in this most effective age of production, and incidentally they constitute a very large consuming power of themselves. We do not want to destroy them. We must make them better, or put them in a position to develop and extend for our benefit and advantage. We want to protect them in all that is their right in order that they may be made more effective and of greater aid to our production. To do this we must pay them enough for their services to get the best, but no more.

Education on all these lines is necessary. Ideas which have been created by error, misunderstanding, misconception and above all, by mistaken as well as wilfully misleading demagogues, must be corrected. And above all, a mutual confidence based upon a full understanding and right intention must be built up between all the elements of a community.

All those who labor or consume must be made to realize that prosperity is based on three elements—Labor to do the physical work;—Capital to supply raw material, plant and equipment and to maintain labor during the time necessary to produce and market;—Brains or intelligence to direct labor, that it may be made more effective to seek and devise new pro-

duction, new methods and control the application of old methods.

Primevally these were combined in one home or family, becoming separated as industrial enterprise expanded. Primitive conditions have passed never to return. Nor do we ever want it forced back upon us, by the introduction and application of unwise, unsound, fallacious theories, which will destroy capital invested in industrial or utility enterprises.

On the farm, however, the home and family and the workshop are combined, or can all be combined in one individual or family. The farmer who does the labor, can accumulate or earn by outside work his money to carry him over while he is converting his own labor into productive and distributive wealth and using his own brains to direct his work in the development of his farm.

And finally, if our Nation is to prosper, we must keep our home markets for our home workers.

We cannot import the cheap laborers of Europe in the way of emigrants, and yet continue to import any of the products of cheap labor, that can as well be made at home.

When intelligence, common sense are applied to all our industries, agricultural as well as manufacturing, and the production per unit of labor is increased by all the advanced aids and improved methods as it can be, reducing the item of labor in all production to a minimum, we need not fear any competition either in our home market or the market of the world.

Brains must be educated either through the experience of others or personal. The cheapest and best education is through the experience of others, this education we must devise ways and means to furnish the boy, and furnish it in such a way as to make him interested. If we can do this a great work will be done.

A greater Springfield, a greater Boston, a greater New England can only come through a wise application of education on sound economic laws. A greater New England must come from the development of our rural resources, as well as our

industrial centers; through the increase of homes and families; homes moderate but sufficient, families contented. In these lay the strength of our nation.

To you, gentlemen of Springfield and elsewhere, we owe a vote of thanks, confidence and support.

Through your energy and persistency we will have in the center of what should be, and what will be if it is not now, the greatest dairy and cattle-raising section of the country—the greatest Dairy and Cattle Show in the world.

Its effect on our producing conditions cannot be overestimated, if through the wise determination of this conference can be established co-operation, co-ordination and harmony of action in all these efforts to improve.

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